

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge
Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan
Next Steps For Marsh Restoration
December 28, 2012**

Now that the comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) is done, what happens next for marsh restoration?

Our next step is to complete a breach engineering study that will tell us how many cubic yards of material is needed to fill the breach as part of the broader marsh restoration. We need this new information after Hurricane Sandy, since the storm deepened and widened the breach, from about 300 feet to 1500 feet wide.

The same breach engineering study will also develop hydrological models and a design for the breach repair that contributes to marsh restoration.

Once we know how much material is needed for the breach repair and where to place it, we will have a better estimate of how much this breach repair will cost.

Finally, we will need to secure the needed sand and sediment for the breach repair, and the funding to pay for the work.

We do know that we do not have enough sand onsite to repair the breach. The state exhausted the sand supply in October, 2011 when it tried to repair the breach. We will likely have to bring sand from offshore, and that will require a substantial dredging effort.

When will the breach engineering study be complete?

We are finalizing negotiations with Atkins Global, an engineering firm, now. We expect to have a final estimate of the cubic yards of material needed to close the breach by March.

When will you start the marsh restoration project identified in the CCP?

In addition to the breach engineering study and hydrological models, Atkins Global is providing a variety of management options for a marsh restoration plan for the refuge. All of these efforts work together toward restoration called for in the CCP.

We expect the more detailed restoration plan to be complete in 2013. That plan will tell us how much sand and sediment is needed for marsh restoration. We can also then develop a cost estimate for the broader restoration project.

Once the marsh restoration plan is complete, we will need to secure a source of sediment and the needed funding for marsh restoration.

Will you repair the breach independently of marsh restoration?

The breach repair is an important first step toward the broader marsh restoration outlined in the CCP. Ideally, we would secure enough material and funding in order to repair the breach and complete marsh restoration at the same time.

However, we recognize that we may not be able to secure all of the resources needed for both of these important steps to happen simultaneously. Because breach repair will help us to restore the marsh, we intend to proceed with the breach repair once funding and a source of sand are identified, and complete marsh restoration as resources become available.

Are there any short-term solutions to address flooding at the Prime Hook Beach community? When can they be implemented?

The Service intends to restore Unit II to a healthy and resilient marsh that can handle more intense and frequent coastal storms. Marsh restoration will not eliminate all future flooding of Prime Hook Road during extreme high tides and storm events, since floodwaters enter the road through locations other than the breaches.

However, the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) is negotiating a contract with Atkins Global, as well as another engineering firm, to identify short-term solutions for community protection and to minimize flooding to individual homes at Prime Hook Beach. The Service looks forward to the results of those studies, and will partner with the state to implement feasible short-term solutions.

Was funding for Prime Hook NWR included in the Hurricane Sandy emergency supplemental bill?

Yes, \$20 million for Prime Hook NWR was included in the Administration's request for emergency supplemental funding for Hurricane Sandy. This is currently the Service's best estimate for the cost to repair the breach that was widened by Hurricane Sandy. The Hurricane Sandy supplemental bill is being considered by Congress.